

CHRIST IN THE CLOUDS
COMING TO 5
JUDGEMENT.

A

SERMON,

FROM MATTHEW XVI. 27.

Then shall he reward every man according to his Works.

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M D C S X C.

CHRIST in the Clouds, &c.

MATTHEW XVI. 27.

Then shall he reward every man according to his Works.

THE text gives us an account of the day of doom, which is the last day of assize, wherein every man shall be tried at the bar of God's justice, and every man shall then and there, receive according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

I shall not trouble myself nor you with the terrors of this day, because I have not time, but will proceed.

It is most certain the day of judgement will come; and that it will be dreadful to all the wicked. But seeing these things must be, what sort of persons ought we to be in all manner of conversation, always looking for the coming of Christ, at whose coming the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, the powers of heaven shall be shaken, the elements shall melt with fervent heat! Who can hear all this, and not be wonderfully dismayed! Oh! who dares eat, drink or sleep, or take a minute's rest! Be sure that day shall come. Awake ye drunkards, and weep all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it shall be pulled from your mouth. Gird yourselves and lament, ye priests; howl ye ministers of the altar, alas! the sore and terrible day of the Lord is at hand.

The

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The DOCTRINE is this,

‘ This is a gospel truth, that Christ, who
came into the world in the form of a servant,
will one day come as a Judge, attended with
his holy angels.’

And if this be so, then first for an use of
exhortation.

1st, Let us all be warned, and while we
have time, provide for that day: Yet the
weather is fair, we may frame an ark to save
us from the flood: yet are the angels at the
gate of Sodom, and yet is Jonah in the streets
of Nineveh; yet the prophet laments, crying,
‘ O Judah! how shall I intreat thee?’ Yea,
the apostle prays, nay, we pray in Christ’s
stead, ‘ that ye be reconciled unto God.’ But
here a question will arise, How will Christ ap-
pear?

I answer, He, who as man, once appear-
ed to be judged, will then appear to judge all
mankind. Consider this, ye that are going to
the bar; what a dreadful fight will this be to
the faithless Jews, stubborn Gentiles, and
wicked Christians, when every eye shall see
him, and they also that pierced him? This is
the man, shall they say, that was crucified for
us, and again crucified by us. Why, alas! every
sin is a cross, and every oath is a spear,
and when that day is come, you must behold
the man, who thus you do crucify by your
daily sin, sure this will be a fearful sight.
Where is the bloody swearer, that can tear
his wounds, heart and blood? At that day all
these words will appear, the heart be visible,

and

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and the body and the blood be sensible of good and evil, then shall the fearful voice proceed from his throne : Where is the blood thou hast spilled ! Here is the woful and terrible Judgement, when thou that art the murderer, shall see the slain Man be thy judge ! What favours canst thou think to expect at his hand, whom thou hast so vilely and treacherously used by thy daily sins : Be sure the Son of Man will come as it is written, ‘ But woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed ; it had been better for that man he had never been born,’ Mat. xxvi. 24.

As Christ shall appear in the form of a man, so this man shall appear in a glorious form. Oh ! sinner, look about you, the Judge is coming : ‘ A fire devours before him, and behind him a flame burns ;’ on every side, the people tremble, and all faces shall gather blackness. Here is a change indeed ! he that was at the bar, now sits on the throne, and that for ever and ever. Then Christ stood as a lamb before Pilate, now Pilate stands as a malefactor before Christ, “ He that was made the footstool of his enemies, must now judge till he has made his enemies his footstool.” Where shall they run, and how shall they seek the clefts of the rock and hollow places ? The glory of his Majesty will kindle a flame, while the heaven and the earth shall flee away from the presence of the powerful Judge.

But if here be the Judge, where is the guard : Behold him coming from above with great power and glory ! Would you know his habit ?

habit! He is indeed clothed with Majesty. Would you know his attendants? They are an host of holy angels; nay, yet a much longer train, even the souls of the saints descending from their imperial seats, and attending the Lamb with great glory. Never was there any judge, Lord of such a circuit: His footstool is the clouds, his feet is the rainbow, his judges are saints, his officers, angels and archangels. The trumpet proclaims a silence, while a just sentence cometh from his mouth upon all the world. Thus you see the assize begun: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, saith the Prophet, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garments were white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and the wheels as burning fire." Dan. vii. 9.

This is the Judge, whose coming is so fearful, ushered in by a fiery cloud, and apparelled in a snowy white, carried in his circuit on burning wheels, and attended with thousands of thousands. O ye Jews! behold the man whom before ye crucified as a malefactor; behold him on his throne, whom you said, his disciples had stolen away by night out of his grave, Mat. xxviii. 12. Behold him in his majesty; him upon whom you would not look in his humility. This is he, at whose appearance the kindreds of the earth should mourn. Such a shout of fury follows the sight of his Majesty, that the vaults shall echo, the hills resound, the earth shall shake, the heavens shall pass away, and be turned to confusion. Then shall

shall the wicked mourn, then shall they weep and wail, yet their tears shall not serve their turn; their sins past betray them, their shame condemns them; and their torments to come confound them: Thus shall the wicked bewail their miserable, hapless, unfortunate birth, and cursed end. O fearful Judge! terrible as an army with banners: The Kings of the earth shall be astonished, and every eye shall see this Judge and tremble at his sight. Lo, but conceive the guilty prisoner come to his trial: Will not the red robes of this Judge make his heart bleed, for his blood shed: Thus have I shewed you how Christ will appear in a glorious manner.

Christ, Think now O sinner! What shall be thy reward when thou shalt meet this Judge? The adulterer, for a while, may flatter beauty, swearers grace their words with oaths, the drunkards kiss their cups, and thank their bodily health till they drink their souls to ruin: But let them remember, 'For all these things God will bring them into judgement;' A sad comfort in the end. How shall the adulterer satisfy his lust, when he lies on a bed of flames! The swearer shall have enough of wounds and blood, when the devil shall torture his body, and rack his soul in hell. The drunkard shall have plenty of his cups, when scalding lead shall be poured down his throat, and his breath draw flames of fire instead of air. As is thy sin, so is thy punishment: This Judge will give just measure in the balance of his indignation and wrath.

For

FOR COMFORT TO ALL THAT ARE THE JUDGE'S FAVOURITES, Now is the day (if ye are God's servants) that Satan shall be trodden under your feet, and you with your Master, Christ, shall be carried into the holy of holies. You may remember how all the men of God, in their greatest anguish here below, have fetched comfort from the eyes of faith, it was at this mountain Job rejoiced, being cast on the dung-hill, that his Redeemer liyed; and that he should see him at the last day stand on the earth; so likewise the evangelist John longed and cried, ' Come, Lord Jefus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20. ' Now little children abide in him, that ' when he shall appear, we may haye confi- ' dence and not be ashamed at his coming. ' And this is the promise that he hath pro- ' mised us, even eternal life,' 1 John i. 28. 25. But I proceed,

The persons to be judged are, a world of men, good and bad, elect and reprobate.

First, There is a summons, and this every man must hear, and this shall be the voice of the last trumpet, ' Arise ye dead, and come ' to Judgement!' O what a searful and terrible voice will this be to all the wicked! How will they tremble at his voice, which makes the earth to tremble! Even at this voice the graves of the dead shall be opened, and every soul re-united to his own body; the dark pit of hell shall be shaken, when the dreadful soul shall leave its place of terror, and once more re-enter into its stinking carion, to receive a greater condemnation. John v. 28, 29. The voice

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voice of Christ is a powerful and strong voice,
' The dead shall hear his voice, and they shall
' come forth, they that have done good unto
' the resurrection of life, and they that have
' done evil to the resurrection of condemna-
' tion.'

Thus much for the summons, you hear it given, and every man must appear: Death must now give back all that he hath taken from the world. What a ghastly and shocking sight shall this be, to see all the graves open, and to see dead men arise out of their graves, and the scattered flying on the wings of the wind, till they meet together in one body, Ezek. xxxvii.

6. ' The dry bones shall live.' Behold, the power of God Almighty, out of the grave and the dust of the earth, from these chambers of death and darkness, shall raise the bodies of the buried, Rev. xx. 12, 13. ' I saw the dead, (faith St. John) ' small and great, stand before God, ' and the sea gave up the dead which were in ' it; and death and hell delivered up the dead ' that were in them, and they were judged eve- ' ry man according to his works. He that said ' to corruption thou art my father, and to the ' worm thou art my sister and mother,' said also, ' I know that my Redeemer liveth, and ' mine eyes shall behold him.' O! good God, How wonderful is thy power. Joel iii. 11, 12. ' Assemble yourselves and come, all ye heathen, ' to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I ' sit to judge all the heathen round about.'

Thus have ye an account of the dead being raised; they are all brought together, and now

we

we must put them asunder, the sheep shall be put upon the right hand, and the goats on the left. And now see the parties thus summoned, raised, gathered, and set apart. Is not here a world of men to be judged all in one day: All tongues, all nations and people of the earth shall appear in one day: We shall then behold each son of Adam, and Adam shall then see all his posterity. Consider this, ye that are high and low, rich and poor, one with another, ' for with God there is no respect of persons.' Hark, O beggar! petitions are out of date, yet thou needest not fear, for thou shalt have justice done thee this day: All causes shall be heard, and thou, tho' ever so poor, and even despised in the world, must with the rest receive thy sentence. Hark, O farmer! now are the lives and leases together finished, this day is the new harvest of the Judge, who gathers in his wheat, and burns up his chaff with fire unquenchable: No bribes, prayers, nor tears; but as thou hast done, so thou art sentenced. Hark, O landlord! where is thy purchase to thee and thy heirs for ever? This day makes an end of all, and unhappy were thy soul, if thou hadst not better land than a barren rock to cover and shelter thee from the presence of thy Judge. Hark, O Captain! how vain is the hope of man to be saved by a multitude of an host. Thou hast commanded all the armies of the earth and hell, yet canst thou not resist the power of heaven. Hark, the trumpet sounds, and the alarm summons thee, thou must appear: All must appear, the beggar,

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gar, the farmer, the captain, the prince, and the greatest potentates of the world! Nay, all shall receive their reward according to their deserts.

2dly, This is for terror to the wicked; every man must appear; Oh! that every man would but think of it. Would you know the man that shall at this day be blessed? It is he that thinks on this day and prepares for it. O then, I beseech you, meditate every day, that you and every man must one day appear before the Judge of the quick and dead, and receive according to your works.

And now having brought the prisoners to their trial, I must tell you what this trial must be; for your works, faith justifies, but it is by works we are judged. Mistake me not, he shall be judged according to his works, as being the best witness of his inward righteousness. But the better to acquaint you with this trial, we come to consider,

1st, How all mens' works shall be manifested to us.

2dly, How all mens' works shall be examined by God.

First, Of the examination of every man's works, Rev. xx, 12. 'I saw the dead, small and great (saith St. John) stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of these things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Remember this, O forgetful sinner, you may commit sin after sin,

sin, and multiply your sins; but be sure God keeps a just account, and none of your sins, tho' ever so secret, shall be forgotten. There is a book of God's memory, it is called a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. 'A book of remembrance was written before God, for them that feared the Lord and called upon his name.' This is that which manifests all secrets; This is that which reveals all doings, whether good or evil. In these records are found at large, Abel's sacrifice, and Cain's murder, Absalom's rebellion, and David's devotion, the Jews' cruelty, and the prophets' innocence. Nothing shall be hid when this book is opened, for all may run and read it, 'God will bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,' Eccles. xii. 4. Wail, ye wicked, and tremble in astonishment. Now your closet sins must be disclosed, and your private faults laid open.

Imprimis, For adultery, envy, blasphemy, drunkenness, oaths, violence, murder, sabbath-breaking, lying, and every other sin from the beginning to the end, from your birth to your death, the total sum is eternal death and damnation. But there is another book, that shall give a more fearful evidence than the former, that is secretary in the soul of man: No man can commit a sin, but the soul that is privy to the fact will write it in his book: What a woful case will thy poor heart be then in? What a strong terror of trembling must it then stand possest with, when this book shall be opened and

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and thy sins revealed? This book is now perhaps shut up and sealed? But in the day of judgement it shall be opened, and what will be the evidence that will be brought in? There is a private session to be held in the breast of every sinner, the memory is the record, truth is the law, damnation is the judgement, hell is the prison, devils the jailors, and conscience both the witness and the judge to pass sentence upon thee. What hopes can he have at the general assize, whose conscience hath condemned him before he appears: Consider this, O thou impenitent sinner!

But yet there is another book we read of, and that is the book of life, wherein is written all the names of God's elect, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. This is the precious book of heaven, wherein if we be registered, not all the powers of darkness, death or devils, can blot us out again. Therefore, to make some useful applications.

1. Consider now, O sinner! what books one day must be set before thee. The time will come, when every word of thy mouth, every glance of thy eye, every moment of thy time, every sermon thou hast heard, every thing thou hast left undone, all shall be seen, and laid open before men, angels and devils; thou shalt then and there, be horribly and everlastingliy ashamed. Never go about then to comit sin, tho' ever so secretly, tho' at midnight, and all the doors locked about thee, for at this great day it shall be brought to light.

2. As you intend the good of your souls, amend

mend your lives, call yourselves to an account while it is called to-day, search and examine all your thoughts, words, and deeds: prostrate yourselves before God, with broken and bleeding affections, pray that your name may be written in the book of life, and if you do so, God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, and all your good works; for at that great day, the book shall be opened, our works manifested, and as we have done, so we must be rewarded; for then shall he reward every man according to his works. But a little to recal ourselves.

The prisoners are tried, the verdict brought in, the indictments are found, and the Judge now sits upon life and death, even ready with sparkling eyes to pronounce the sentence. The Lord grant, that when this day comes, the sentence may be for us, and we be saved, to our everlasting comfort. Oh! now hold up your heads, all ye saints of the most high God, for this shall be a blessed day for you, for then shall ye hear the sweet heavenly voice of Christ, saying, ‘Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.’ I cannot express what joy it will be to the righteous when they shall hear Christ say, “Come ye blessed souls who have been bathed in repenting tears.” Here is a sentence able to revive the dead, much more the afflicted. Are you sorrowing for your sins, leave it a while, and meditate with me on this ensuing melody. Hark! yonder is the choir of angels sounding to the Judge, while he is pronouncing the sentence.

tence. Now is the day of your coronation, now shall ye be made perfectly happy, and that for ever. Come, saith Christ, you that have suffered for me, now you shall have your reward; you shall have your souls filled to the brim with joy, such as is unspeakable, and full of glory.

But I must return to the left hand, and shew another crew prepared for another sentence, And Oh! what a terrible sentence will that be, which will make all ears glow and tingle. ' His lips, saith the Prophet, are full of indignation, and his tongue like a consuming fire,' Isa. xxx. 28. What fire is so hot as that fiery sentence, Mat. xxv. 41. ' Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

1. They must depart. This seems nothing to the wicked now; they are content to be gone; they have much more delight in sin, than in God's service. But whether must they go? From me. If from me, then from all my mercies, my glory, and my salvation. But whither, O Lord, shall the cursed go, that depart from thee? Into what haven shall they arrive? What master shall they serve? It is thought a great punishment to be banished from our native soils: What is it then to be banished from the Almighty God? But whither must they go? Into everlasting fire. O! what bed is this? No feathers but fire, no friends but furies, no ease but fetters, no daylight but darkness, no clocks to pass away the time, but endless eternity, fire eternal, always burning and

and never dying. O who can endure everlasting flame! It shall not be quenched night nor day: the smoke thereof shall go up for ever and ever. The wicked shall be crowded together like bricks in a fiery furnace: But for whom was this fire prepared? ' For the devil and his angels.' These must be your companions. The last sentence is now pronounced. What! Go, Who? Ye cursed into everlasting fire, to crews of devils. O take heed, that you live in the fear of God, lest, that leaving his service, he give you this reward, ' Depart from me ye cursed, &c.'

2. Consider, then, what fearful trembling will seize on their souls that have their sentence for eternal flames: Oh! which way will they turn? How will they escape the Almighty's wrath? To go backward is impossible, to go forward is intolerable. Whose help will they crave? God is their Judge, heaven their foe, the saints deride them, angels hate them. Good Lord? What a world of miseries hath seized on miserable souls. Their executioners are devils, the dungeon, hell; the earth stands open, and the furnace burning, ready to receive them. Oh! How will these poor souls quake and tremble? Every part of their body will bear a part in their doleful misery: Eyes weeping, hands wringing, breasts beating, hearts aching, with voices crying. Now, O man of the earth, what shall thy wealth avail thee? One drop of water to cool thy tongue in the flames, is worth more than all the pleasures in the world.

Thus

Thus you have heard the sentence of the just and wicked: And the Judge is risen from his glorious seat. The saints guard him along, and the sentenced prisoners are delivered to the jailors, shrieks of horror shall be heard. What woes and lamentations shall be uttered, when devils and reprobates, and all the damned crew of hell, shall be driven into hell, never to return. Down they go, howling, shrieking and gnashing their teeth: The world leaves them, the earth forsakes them, hell entertains them, there they must live, and yet not live nor die, but dying live, and living die.

Oh miserable must they be, if the drowning of the old world, the swallowing up of Korah, and the burning of Sodom with brimstone, were attended with such terror and hideous outcries; how infinitely, to all possibility of conceit or expression of belief, will be the confusion and trembling of that red fiery day: In a word, what wailing, weeping, roaring, and yelling, filling both heaven, earth and hell! O most miserable wretches, Matth. xxii. 11. 'Take them away, and cast them into utter darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' A darkness indeed; they must for ever be debarred from the light of heaven. Sunshine never peeps within these walls, nothing is there but smoke and darkness; and such is the portion of sinners, and the reward of the wicked.

